

## Avon Old Farms Convalescent Hospital

Alice Yergin Zacchera relates the following having served as the "Supervisor of Instructors" at Avon Old Farms when it was used as a Convalescent Hospital during World War II. Alice was brought in from a New York City School for the Blind to serve the war effort. Alice met and married Raymond Zacchera of Avon who was still in the Army at the time, having been injured in the Pacific. Raymond's position at Old Farms was as "Chairman of the Industrial Arts Department" for the blinded servicemen.



*Avon Old Farms. Photo courtesy of The Hartford Courant*

The Town of Avon served our government in a humanitarian way during and after World War II. Mrs. Theodate Pope Riddle, builder and owner of Avon Old Farms School offered to lease the entire property to the government as a base to rehabilitate servicemen who became disabled due to the loss of vision (partial or total) while serving their country. In 1944 the school officially became "Old Farms Convalescent Hospital."

It was here that hundreds of service men were oriented to live the rest of their lives with limited or no vision. A detachment of able bodied service men were stationed there along with civil service employees to carry out a program for the men. Each "trainee" was interviewed many times and an individual program of classes was set up for him. Classes were extremely varied from Braille, musical instruments, typing, woodworking, machinery, automobile mechanics, etc., as well as skills for daily living. Those who were so inclined were temporarily placed in factories in the local area to learn how to adapt there. Each trainee was at the school for four months and about 900 were taken care of in that setting.